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**Citation for published version:**

Hämeen-Anttila, J & Ramos, C (ed.) 2017, 'Rustam in Arabic literature and the Middle Persian Khwadynmag', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.*, vol. 107, pp. 1-58.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Published In:**

Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.

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IM SELBSTVERLAG DES INSTITUTS FÜR ORIENTALISTIK

WIENER ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR DIE KUNDE DES MORGENLANDES

**107**

**2017**

# Rustam in Arabic Literature and the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*

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## Abstract

The article discusses the contents of the lost Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* on the basis of Arabic and Classical Persian sources, using the figure of Rustam as a case study. The results imply that Rustam had at most a marginal role in the *Khwadāynāmag*. Stories about him were transmitted to Arabic literature through other channels, including translations of other historical works from Middle Persian into Arabic.

## Keywords

Arabic/Persian historiography; Rustam; *Khwadāynāmag*.

The greatest hero of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, Rustam,<sup>1</sup> is sparsely documented from pre-Islamic times,<sup>2</sup> but there can be little serious doubt as to his importance in at least the East Iranian world. From the tenth century onwards he became in a short time a national hero, as not only shown by Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, and its tenth-century sources, but also by the proliferating genre of later epics, largely centred on Rustam and the other Sistanian heroes, much of the material of which goes back to times before Firdawsī.<sup>3</sup> The scarcity of extant Middle Persian references

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<sup>1</sup> As the material for this article mainly comes from Arabic sources, I use an Arabicizing transcription for Persian names and words, too. The names are mostly kept in the form given in the texts, which is why many appear in several forms (e.g., Isfandiyār, Isbandiyār, Isfandiyādh; Kay-Kāwūs, Kay-Qābūs). These should be obvious for an informed reader. I thank Dr. Ilkka Lindstedt (Helsinki) for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See Sims-Williams (1976): 54-61, for a Sogdian epic fragment on a fight of demons against Rustam and Rakhsh (Rwstmy, Rghshy). For the murals in the so-called Rustam Room, see Marshak (2002): 25-108, who dates (pp. 30-31) the Pendjikent murals to 700-740 AD. Rustam is only mentioned once in Moses Khorenatsi, *History*, p. 141, and even there only in a passing comparison to a similar figure of Armenian tradition, Angl. This does *not* speak for his fame in the West. Despite this being only one, passing mention, Yamamoto (2003): 57, sees it as a mark of the spreading of his tales to the West, and Barthold (1944): 137 and n. 4, even speaks of stories unknown from the later epic of Firdawsī. All this stretches to breaking point the evidence of a single comparison of Angl to Rustam, who “had the strength of 120 elephants”. Also in early Georgian literature, Rustam seems to have been little known, although many characters of the *Khwadāynāmag* did find their way into early Georgian historical texts, cf. Rapp (2014): 169-260.

<sup>3</sup> See van Zutphen (2014): 2-3. There is little relevant material in Gazerani (2016).

to Rustam<sup>4</sup> is clearly due to the lack of preserved sources in Pahlavi and/or the fact that Rustam stories continued to circulate in oral transmission as part of the repertoire of minstrels.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the stories of Rustam are linked to the national history of Iran and, thus, are related to the material of the lost *Khwadāynāmag*, which was translated in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa' as *Siyar al-mulūk* or *Siyar mulūk al-'ajam*.<sup>6</sup> This royal chronicle seems to have narrated from a royal point of view the national history of Iran from the Creation to, at least, the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when it was composed.<sup>7</sup> As Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation has been lost<sup>8</sup> its contents have to be deduced from later quotations and references and the information we receive from Arabic and Classical Persian sources.

<sup>4</sup> According to Christensen (1931): 131-132 (see also van Zutphen 2014: 32, n. 55) the appearance of Rustam and Zāl in the Iranian *Bundahishn* are due to later additions that took place under the influence of the national epic.

<sup>5</sup> For references to poems (often called *ash'ār*) or stories sung in courts, see, e.g., ps.-al-Jāhiz, *Maḥāsin*, p. 363 (during the *nawrūz* ritual, the king was sung "songs wherein there are mentioned the sons of mighty kings" *aghānī yudhkaru fihā abnā'u l-jabābira*); al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §479, quoted and translated below. On the oral transmission of Persian epic poetry, cf., e.g., Yamamoto (2003), Šafā (1378 A.H.Sh.): 92-105, and the articles in Melville – van den Berg (2012). Olga Davidson's studies, e.g., Davidson (2006), should be read with some care, as the author ignores all evidence contrary to her own theories. For Parthian minstrels, see Boyce (1957).

<sup>6</sup> For the *Khwadāynāmag* and its transmission history, see, e.g., Rypka (1959): 152-164, Boyce (1968b): 57-60, Cereti (2001): 191, 200, Macuch (2009): 173-181, Rubin (2005), (2008a), and (2008b), Daniel (2012), and Hämeen-Anttila (2013). On Ibn al-Muqaffa', specifically, see Hämeen-Anttila (2017) and the literature mentioned there. For Firdawsī, see also de Blois (1992-1997): 112-159. The title of Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation is given in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, p. 132 (transl. Dodge 1970: 260) as *Khudāy-nāme fī l-siyar*, but usually it is referred to as *Siyar al-mulūk* (or *Siyar mulūk al-'ajam*). The title *HD'D-nāme* in *Fihrist*, p. 305, should be emended to \**Khudāy-nāme*, see Hämeen-Anttila (2013): 68.

<sup>7</sup> There is a rather general opinion that the *Khwadāynāmag* later underwent a (Middle Persian) edition so as to include the last Sasanians up to the Arab conquest. However, there is no evidence for this, and the idea seems to have been born out of a misguided belief that Firdawsī's epic follows the *Khwadāynāmag* and the latter may be reconstructed on the basis of the former. The differences in the Arabic material do not indicate the existence of several separate versions of the *Khwadāynāmag* in Middle Persian, each translated independently into Arabic: the differences were created within the Arabic tradition. The passage of Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 9-10, mentions several versions (*nusakh*) of the *Khwadāynāmag* but this refers to Arabic translations. The passage has been discussed in Hämeen-Anttila (2013): 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> The anonymous *Nihāyat al-arab* is not to be equated with it, cf. Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

One of the open questions is whether and to what extent Rustam and the other Sistanians had a place in the *Khwadāynāmag*.<sup>9</sup> Another question is when have the two traditions been joined together to form one continuous narrative. These two questions will be discussed in this paper, mainly in the light of Arabic literature.

Although Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation has later disappeared, it was influential in its own time and several centuries thereafter. In order to discuss whether it contained material on Rustam, we have to go through early Arabic sources, or sources that contain early material.

Firdawsī became influential in Persia especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and Arabic works written later than that are always open to doubt as to whether or not they have been contaminated by material derived directly or indirectly from Firdawsī's work. Sources earlier than this, both in Arabic and Classical Persian, mainly derive their material from the now lost earlier sources and often differ in details from Firdawsī. Arabic and Persian historical works remained largely independent from the epic tradition even later and, especially on the Arabic side, Firdawsī's influence was limited, despite his overwhelming influence on Persian belles lettres from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Arabic sources usually circulate material derived from earlier historical works and show only limited marks of borrowings from Firdawsī's epic, presumably through Classical Persian historical works. On the Persian side, Firdawsī's influence is stronger, but here, too, many sources prefer the "historical" tradition to Firdawsī's "epic" tradition.<sup>10</sup>

When going through first-millennium Arabic texts, the first thing that strikes one is how rarely Rustam is mentioned and how little the Arabs seem to have known about him. The list of Arabic sources that completely ignore Rustam is long. To take but a few examples, al-Jāḥiẓ, who is usually well informed about everything, does not even mention him in his main works (*Bayān*; *Ḥayawān*; *Rasā'il*, ed. Muḥammad Hārūn), and we search in vain for him in al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. Likewise Ibn Qutayba mentions him neither in his *Ma'ārif*, which contains a chapter on Persian kings (pp. 652-667), deriving its material

<sup>9</sup> It should be emphasized that I am using the title *Khwadāynāmag* in its proper sense, i.e., as the title of a book originally composed in the sixth century in Middle Persian. The term is often vaguely used to refer to all kinds of materials related to Persian national history, which has caused a lot of confusion when stories probably unrelated to this book have been attributed to "the *Khwadāynāmag* tradition" (a vague term to be avoided) and have then been taken as part of the "official history" of the Sasanians. In this article, "*Khwadāynāmag*" refers to this specific Middle Persian book, whereas "the Book of Kings tradition" refers to various tales and other materials, such as chronology, in Middle Persian, Arabic, and Classical Persian dealing with Iranian national history.

<sup>10</sup> It should be pointed out, though, that there is no clear borderline between the two traditions, "historical" and "epic". The clear division between history and belles lettres is modern, not Mediaeval.

from *kutub Siyar mulūk al-‘ajam*,<sup>11</sup> nor in the *‘Uyūn*, and al-Tha‘ālibī is equally ignorant of him in his *Thimār* and has little to say about him in his other works. In his *I‘jāz*, pp. 32-33, there are some maxims attributed to Rustam (and others to Zāl), but one can hardly recognize Firdawsī’s Rustam from these rather stereotyped sayings that have nothing heroic in them.<sup>12</sup> When one does encounter the name Rustam, it is usually the general of al-Qādisiyya that is intended. Zāl, Sām, and the other members of the Sistanian family are equally unknown in these sources. On the Christian Arabic side, the situation is similar: e.g., Eutychius does not even mention the name Rustam.

Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira* I: 278 (no. 733), only gives a brief saying by an unidentified Rustam (*idhā aradta an tuṭā‘ fa-sal mā yustaṭā‘*). Al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī‘* II: 792, gives the same saying, but attributes it to Isfandiyār.<sup>13</sup> Al-Tha‘ālibī’s *I‘jāz*, p. 33, gives us a clue as to how this confusion was generated: there the saying is attributed to Rustam, who gives this piece of advice to Isfandiyār (*wa-qāla* [i.e., Rustam] *li-Isfandiyār*).

It is often, but erroneously, stated that Rustam and his deeds were already known on the Arabian Peninsula in the early seventh century and that stories about him were brought there by al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, who had learned them in al-Ḥīra.<sup>14</sup> In modern studies, Theodor Nöldeke (1920): 11, n. 5, seems to be the first to mention this, twice referring to Ibn Hishām’s (d. 218/833) *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*. In *Sīra* I: 246, he tells that al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith learned in al-Ḥīra tales of Persian kings and *aḥādīth Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*. In *Sīra* I: 294, he says that al-Naḍr related stories about the mighty Rustam and Isfandiyār (*wa-ḥaddathahum ‘an Rustam al-Sindīd* – read: *al-shadīd* – *wa-‘an Isfandiyār*) and the kings of Persia.<sup>15</sup>

In Nöldeke’s time, Ibn Hishām’s *Life of Muḥammad* was mainly taken at face value, miracles excluded. Over the last few decades, it has become increasingly clear that the historians’ reports on early Islam and the life of the Prophet should not be taken as „wie es eigentlich gewesen“, but should be considered products of their authors’ time or, at most, of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the passages only prove

<sup>11</sup> Either this is a generic reference to books on Persian history in Arabic or to Ibn al-Muqaffa’s translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*: deficient writings, such as KTB for *kitāb*, were common in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>12</sup> It should be remembered that he is not necessarily the same person as the author of *Ghurār*. The question is still open. The *Ghurār* will be studied after the other Arabic sources, for reasons that will become clear later on.

<sup>13</sup> In addition, he mentions an unidentified Rustam in *Rabī‘* II: 525.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., e.g., Barthold (1944): 137, n. 4; Yamamoto (2003): 56, 74. For al-Ḥīra, see Toral-Niehoff (2014).

<sup>15</sup> See also Toorawa (2005): 80 (and n. 80 on p. 161). The idea (of F. Bedrehi, cf. Toorawa, n. 80) that al-Naḍr would refer to the stories of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* is mere speculation and based on no evidence whatsoever.

<sup>16</sup> Passages from Ibn Ishāq represent the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, the additions of Ibn Hishām the early ninth century.

the obvious, viz. that Arab scholars of the late 8<sup>th</sup>, early 9<sup>th</sup> century knew about Rustam.

How vaguely even later authors probably did this is shown by al-Suhaylī's (d. 581/1185) commentary on Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*. The main passage on Rustam comes in *Rawḍ* III: 157-160, commenting on Ibn Hishām's mention of al-Naḍr. In III: 158, al-Suhaylī writes: "Rustam, who is called the Lord of Banū \*Dastān, was a Turkish (sic) king" (*wa-kāna Rustam alladhī yuqālu lahu Rustam sayyid banī Raysān*<sup>17</sup> *min mulūk al-Turk*). Some lines later he adds: "There is also another Rustam who has been mentioned in the stories about Kay-Qubādh. He lived before the time of Solomon. After Kay-Qubādh, Rustam was Vizier to his son Kay-Qāwūs" (*wa-Rustam ākhar madhkūr ayḍan qabla hādhā fī aḥādīth Kay Qubādh wa-kāna qabla 'ahd Sulaymān thumma kāna Rustam wazīran ba 'da Kay Qubādh li-bnihi Kay Qāwūs*). A page later he has this to say (III: 159-160): "and I do not know whether the Rustam whom (sic) Isfandiyādh killed was the same as the Rustam who accompanied Kay-Qāwūs, or someone else, but it would seem that he was not, because the period between Kay-Qāwūs and Kay-Yastāsb<sup>18</sup> is very long. We have already mentioned that he was a Turk" (... *wa-lā adrī hal Rustam alladhī qatalahu Isfandiyādh*<sup>19</sup> *huwa Rustam ṣāḥib Kay Qāwūs am ghayruhu wa 'l-zāhir annahu laysa bihi li-anna muddat mā bayna Kay Qāwūs wa-Kay Yastāsb ba 'da jiddan kamā qaddamnā annahu min al-Turk*). If anything, these passages show how ignorant the writer was about Rustam.

In Qur'ānic commentaries, Q 31: 6 is understood to refer to this al-Naḍr, and more or less the same scanty information is given in almost all *tafsīrs*. In some, such as that of al-Bayḍāwī (late 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century) (IV: 150), it is further stated that al-Naḍr found the story of Rustam and Isfandiyār and *bought* it. While seemingly an interesting reference to the story existing in a written, and hence buyable, form, the verb is unfortunately derived from the formulation of the Qur'ān, which is here taken in a literal sense: *wa-min al-nāsi man yashtarī lahwa l-ḥadīth* (literally: "among people there are some who *buy* diverting stories").<sup>20</sup> The verb is merely copied from the Qur'ān to al-Bayḍāwī's narrative and the exegetical tradition in general.

It should be emphasized that the fact that Ibn Hishām and the authors of the commentaries knew Rustam and that they connected him to al-Naḍr and the *asāṭīr*

<sup>17</sup> Read: Dastān; the error may have been committed by the copyist or even the editor.

<sup>18</sup> A form (for Bishtāsb) commonly used by Arab historians, and not to be taken as a mere error by al-Suhaylī.

<sup>19</sup> Sic! This could, though, easily be emended to *qatala*[[hu]] *Isfandiyādh*. A similar sentence, also emendable, occurs on p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> *Ishtarā* is mostly used in the Qur'ān in a figurative sense (e.g., *alladhīna shtaraw-u l-ḥalālata bi 'l-hudā* "those who prefer erring to guidance" Q 2: 16). There is also an odd story, told on the (dubious) authority of al-Aṣma'ī (< a Bedouin), about the meeting of Rustam and Isfandiyār with Luqmān, told in, e.g., ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsīn*, pp. 46-47.



*al-awwalīn* only shows that they were aware that there were *some* stories about Rustam circulating in Persian lore. It does not follow that either they or the legendary al-Naḍr would have known these stories in any detail.<sup>21</sup> That Rustam was the hero of long stories of the Persians was common knowledge by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, cf. below.

When we come to historical sources, we find some information about Rustam, but still meagre and sometimes disquietingly different from what we might expect on the basis of Firdawsī.

In his *al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl*, al-Dīnawarī (d. not later than 290/902-3) first, p. 6, mentions that the Indian King Porus (familiar from the Alexander Romance and other Alexander narratives)<sup>22</sup> and, according to some (*yuqāl*), Rustam were descended from Ghānim ibn ‘Alwān. On pp. 27-28, he tells that Rustam was the governor (‘*āmīl*) of Sistan and Khurasan for Bishtāsb. He was in the service (*wakāna yantamī ilā*) of Kay-Qubādh and grew furious because Bishtāsb had converted to Zoroaster’s (new) religion and for this reason rebelled. Bishtāsb sent his son Isfandiyādh against him. Isfandiyādh challenged Rustam but was killed by him, and “Persians tell a lot about this” (*fa-yaqūlu l-‘ajam fī dhālika qawlan kathīran*). The author adds that Rustam died soon after, but gives no details concerning his death. On p. 29, he tells that later Bahman killed those he could of his offspring and family, but again gives no names. Much later, p. 82 (in the story of Bahrām Chūbīn), he lets Bahrām briefly refer to Rustam having saved Qābūs when the latter was imprisoned but does not mention his role in extracting revenge for Siyāwush. This is all this historian from Dīnawar, in Western Iran, has to tell about Rustam.

Except for a few stray notes on Rustam, al-Dīnawarī concentrates on the battle between Rustam and Isfandiyār, which is typical of most early Arabic historians, as will be seen. Another theme that should be pointed out is the conversion of Bishtāsb to Zoroastrianism, contrasted with Rustam’s refusal to leave his ancestral religion, an event used to explain the falling out of Bishtāsb and Rustam. Later Arabic and Classical Persian sources often elaborate on this and, either implicitly or explicitly, identify this ancestral religion with monotheism.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The same goes for the rare mentions of Rustam in Umayyad poetry, cf. Nöldeke (1920): 11 (al-Akḥṭal).

<sup>22</sup> For Porus, see Aerts-Doulfikar (2010), Index.

<sup>23</sup> For others, though, Zoroaster was a prophet (e.g., al-Maḥdisī, *Bad’* III: 149, cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2012: 154-155). Both attitudes put Iranian nationalism within an Islamic framework, the former by identifying the first Persians as monotheists, the latter by identifying Zoroastrians as such. The third option for Iranian nationalists fell outside the framework of Islam, viz. denying Islam as God’s religion. This was not only the way Zoroastrians often put it, but also what many sectarian rebels opted for. According to many historians, including al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), *Khabar* §8, it was

The anonymous *Nihāyat al-arab* seems to share the same sources with al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*, but the mutual relations of the two are still unclear.<sup>24</sup> It is evident, however, that they represent traditions that circulated in Arabic before al-Ṭabarī, who, in general, derives much material from the same tradition.

The *Nihāya* shows that its author was intimately familiar with the battle between Rustam and Isfandiyār. On p. 26, he briefly mentions that Rustam the Mighty (text: *RQTM al-Shadīd*) fought against Isfandiyār, but on pp. 82-85, he elaborates on this under the heading *Ḥadīth Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* "The Story of Rustam and Isfandiyār", given on the purported authority of Ibn al-Muqaffa'.<sup>25</sup> The story starts with a clear indication of source, put in the mouth of Ibn al-Muqaffa': "I found in/among the books of Persians (the story of) the war between Rustam and Isfandiyār" (*wajadtu fī kutub al-ʿajam ḥarb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*), as if this were a separate story, as it probably was, cf. below. It should be noted that "the books of the Persians" is an often-used formulation and does not imply that the source was in Classical or Middle Persian. More probably the expression here refers to books in Arabic. There is no indication that the author would have known Persian.

The story is related in a more extensive form than in al-Dīnawarī's version, but in a similar fashion. According to this version, some learned Persians claim that Rustam lived in Sistan and was descended from Ṭasm ibn Nūḥ, while others (still Persians?) say that his mother was a Ṭasmī, but his father descended from Nimrod. Bishtāsf converted to Zoroaster's religion. Earlier he had been imprisoned by a king descended from Hām and had been freed by Rustam. Bishtāsf had given Rustam Khurasan and Sistan to rule and had crowned him. But when Rustam heard about the conversion, he became furious and rebelled. Bishtāsf sent his son Isfandiyār against Rustam. Rustam told him that he would fight until Bishtāsf left Zoroastrianism.<sup>26</sup> They fought for 40 days. Rustam made a trick and led his army, against the agreement, to attack Isfandiyār's army, but to no avail. Again they fought a duel, in which Isfandiyār shot a thousand arrows at Rustam and all hit their mark. Isfandiyār called to him and suggested they stop for that day.

His horse Rakhsh could not take him over a deep river, so Rustam dismounted. Back home, he attended to his wounds and called for a *kāhin*. The *kāhin* predicted

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Noah who brought monotheism to the Persians, whereas Bīwarāsf (in other sources Buddha) brought Ḥanīfism, or Šābianism, to them.

<sup>24</sup> See Grignaschi (1969), (1974), Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

<sup>25</sup> It should be emphasized that the attributions in this work are, in general, extremely dubious. The question has been discussed in Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

<sup>26</sup> Zoroastrianism is also intimately related to Isfandiyār in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurār*, p. 315, which mentions a magic-proof chain (*silsila*) given by Zardusht to Isfandiyār. There may well be a connection between this and the chains Rustam was supposed to be put in.

that Rustam would kill Isfandiyār, but would himself die soon thereafter. He further told that he would be able to kill Isfandiyār with arrows made of the tamarisk which grew on the island of Kāzarūn. Rustam sent a message to Isfandiyār and asked for a longer respite. Isfandiyār consented to this, and Rustam sailed to an island near Ṭabaristān and got the wood for his arrows. (There is no mention of Sīmurgh, usually called al-‘Anqā’ in Arabic sources,<sup>27</sup> in the story, nor in the whole book). On the following day Rustam shot three arrows and killed Isfandiyār, whose army returned to report to Bishtāsf. The king died of sorrow, and Bahman ascended the throne. Soon after Rustam had a hunting accident and died in a pit, but it is also said that he died of the wounds caused by Isfandiyār. The killing of his family is not mentioned.

These two sources lead us to the greatest historian of the first millennium, al-Ṭabarī (d. 314/923). Again, the information we receive about Rustam is marginal and strictly centred on the episode of Rustam and Siyāwukhsh.<sup>28</sup> *Ta’rīkh* I: 598-604 (transl. 4: 2-7) is the longest passage on Rustam and it only narrates the episode of Siyāwukhsh (also giving Rustam’s full name with four forefathers between Dastān, i.e., Zāl, and Sahm, i.e., Sām), with reference to “a long story” told about him. Then the text continues with the attempt of Kay-Kāwūs to fly and relates how he was imprisoned in Yemen and saved by Rustam. This is partly narrated on the authority of Hishām (ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī, d. 204/819).<sup>29</sup>

The other mentions of Rustam are marginal. *Ta’rīkh* I: 681 (transl. 4: 76) tells, on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, that Isfandiyār was killed by Rustam, and *Ta’rīkh* I: 687 (transl. 4: 81-82) that Bahman slew Rustam, Dastān, Azwāra, and Farāmarz. The only remaining reference to Rustam in the whole *Ta’rīkh* comes in II: 1154 (transl. 23: 98), where a mighty warrior is first compared to Satan and then to Rustam.

The Persian translation/reworking of al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh* by Bal‘amī (d. towards the end of the tenth century)<sup>30</sup> is hardly more informative, even though its author had at his disposal Persian works belonging to the Book of Kings tradition. Whether his unwillingness to provide more material on Rustam depends on his wish to follow al-Ṭabarī here more closely – elsewhere, he freely adds material

<sup>27</sup> For an explicit identification of the two, see, e.g., Tūsī, *‘Ajā’ib*, p. 512.

<sup>28</sup> In al-Ṭabarī’s case one could argue that his book is focused on prophets and kings, as its full title indicates (*Kitāb Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*), and for this reason leaves Rustam aside. However, considering the scarcity of Rustam material unrelated to Siyāwush or Isfandiyār in earlier Arabic sources it seems improbable that al-Ṭabarī would have had much more material on him but had excluded it on purpose.

<sup>29</sup> The famous MS-Sprenger (accessed through the digital images in [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN782026311&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN782026311&PHYSID=PHYS_0001)) is similar to al-Ṭabarī’s version.

<sup>30</sup> According to Gardīzī, he died in 363/974, but on other evidence his death should be set in the 380s/990s. See Peacock (2007): 34.

from Persian and other sources – or whether he did not have any additional material is unfortunately a question which cannot be solved. However, it at least proves that in Bukhārā, where Bal‘amī wrote (or partly commissioned) his work, Rustam was not the central character of the national history: Bal‘amī’s Sāmānid patron Maṣṣūr ibn Nūḥ obviously did not expect him to deal more extensively with Rustam.

Bal‘amī concisely narrates the following episodes related to Rustam’s life: Siyāwukhsh (pp. 419-421); Kay-Kāwūs in Yemen (pp. 422-423); Rustam kills Isfandiyār (pp. 468-469); and finally, with explicit reference to al-Ṭabarī (p. 482), Bahman’s killing of Rustam’s father and brother. A couple of lines earlier, based on *Kitāb-e Akhbār-e ‘ajam*, Bal‘amī had told that Rustam had already been killed by a brother of his, which, unsurprisingly, shows that Firdawsī did not invent this motif but it circulated already in the tenth century.

Other early Arabic historians also indicate that Rustam was strongly present only in the episodes of Siyāwush and Isfandiyār. Al-Maḡdisī (d. after 355/966), a very well-informed historian, who used native sources,<sup>31</sup> is only slightly more informative. In his *Bad’* III: 147-148, under the title “The story of how Rustam saved Kay-Kāwūs” (*qiṣṣat Rustam kayfa stanqadha Kay-Kāwūs*), he tells how the latter was imprisoned by the Ḥimyar. Rustam came from Sistan with a great army and asked the ‘Anqā’ (i.e., Sīmurgh) for help. The bird gave him one of his own feathers and promised to come if Rustam were to burn it. The Ḥimyarī king had, by magic, suspended his town between heaven and earth. Rustam called al-‘Anqā to help him and the bird took his horse in his claws and let Rustam ride on his back. Thus, he took Rustam to the town, where Rustam rescued Kay-Kāwūs from the pit, taking also Su‘dā (Arabicized for Sūdābe) back to Babylon. Then the author briefly refers (*Bad’* III: 148-149) to the story of Siyāwush and Su‘dā, which, he says, is like that of Joseph and Zulaykhā. Siyāwush is imprisoned, and Rustam comes to kill Su‘dā. (There is no mention of the Turkish adventures of Siyāwush, except that he was killed in the land of the Turks.) The passage ends by throwing doubt on the credibility of the story of al-‘Anqā’, *wa-llāhu a‘lam*.

Even the best authority on pre-Islamic Persia, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961 or 360/971), almost completely ignores Rustam in his *Ta’rīkh sinī l-mulūk*, which was written on the basis of several versions of the (Arabic translations of the) *Khwadāynāmag*. In the chapter on the South Arabian kings (not the Persians), Ḥamza only mentions (p. 101) that the South Arabian Shammar-Yar‘ash was, according to some, killed by Rustam ibn Dastān. It is indicative that the focus here is on the South Arabian king, not Rustam. This absolute paucity of Rustam material is significant since Ḥamza seems to have followed very closely the Arabic translation(s) of the *Khwadāynāmag*, on which he is our most reliable and best-informed authority.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (2012).

<sup>32</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (2013).

Another usually well-informed author is Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), whose *Tajārib* again provides meagre results for Rustam. *Tajārib* I: 70-72, resumes the story of Kay-Qābūs, Siyāwukhsh and Rustam: Rustam educates Siyāwukhsh (I: 70); Siyāwukhsh implores Rustam to ask Kay-Qābūs to send him against Afrāsiyāb (I: 71, as in Firdawsī, but this detail is lacking from al-Ṭabarī, one of Miskawayh's sources). When Bīb (= Gēv) brings Kay-Khusraw to Iran, Rustam comes with an army to welcome him and in several battles defeats the Turkish forces that had followed the fugitives (I: 72). Finally, Rustam saves Kay-Qābūs from Yemen. This is the longest passage on Rustam in Miskawayh's work, but there is also a reference to Persians telling stories about Rustam's strength (*shidda, ba's* I: 72). Miskawayh presents a manumission letter to Rustam, a Persian version of which is found in Ibn al-Balkhī's *Fārsnāme*, p. 43.<sup>33</sup> Miskawayh gives no further mentions of Rustam in the Kayanid history and has nothing on him in the chapter on Kay-Khusraw.

Other early Arabic historical and geographical sources, excepting al-Mas'ūdī and al-Tha'ālibī, *Ghurār*, to be discussed later, give only negligible references to Rustam or follow one of the above-discussed sources. Al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Futūḥ*, p. 394, Ibn al-Faqīh (wrote in 290/903 or soon after), *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 208 (= transl. Massé, p. 252), and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), *Kāmil* III: 128, mention "Rustam's Stable" in connection with the Arab-Islamic conquest of Sistan, which has been taken<sup>34</sup> as an indication that Rustam was already famous at that time. As the passage concerns Iran and more specifically Sistan, he obviously was famous, but again one should keep in mind the historiographical difficulties: what in a historical source is set at the time of the conquests, need not, and very often does not, date from that far back.

In his *Āthār*, al-Bīrūnī (d. about 442/1050), mentions in one sentence (p. 121) how Rustam ibn Dastān ibn Karshāsb *al-malik* rescued Kay-Kāwūs when Shammar-Yar'ash of Yemen had imprisoned him, deriving this information from Ḥamza (in whose work this detail is, however, not given or preserved). Some pages later, on p. 151, Rustam is said to have killed Shammar-Yar'ash, which does come from Ḥamza. In this book, al-Bīrūnī seems almost completely unaware of Rustam's heroic deeds. It should be noted that al-Bīrūnī is one of the rare Arabic authors who had Abū 'Alī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī's<sup>35</sup> *al-Shāhnāma* at their disposal (*Āthār*, pp. 114), and al-Balkhī had been able to use both Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Siyar* and other Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Hence, the almost complete lack of Rustam material is highly significant when assessing

<sup>33</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 15 (transl. in Dodge 1970: 23-24; from al-Jahshiyārī's, d. 331/942-3, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*), gives the first part of the letter in a very similar form, but ignores the latter part of the text. The letter is also reproduced in, e.g., al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §115 (as in Miskawayh).

<sup>34</sup> Nöldeke (1920): 11; Barthold (1944): 134.

<sup>35</sup> Possibly identical with Abū l-Mu'ayyad al-Balkhī, see de Blois (1992-1997): 67-68.

what Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* contained and what it did not.

The situation does not much change in al-Bīrūnī's other books. In *Kitāb Mā li'l-Hind*, there is only one mention of Rustam at the very end of the book, p. 547 (transl. 2: 246). The rainbow, *qaws-Quṣaḥ*, is attached by Indians to the name of a hero of theirs "just as our common people attach it to the name of Rustam" (*kamā yuḍīfuhā 'awāmmunā ilā Rustam*).<sup>36</sup> Al-Bīrūnī, who is usually extremely well informed about matters Persian, seems to know conspicuously little about Rustam (although the short note in *Kitāb Mā li'l-Hind* is interesting in itself).

Later geographical works are equally sparse when it comes to Rustam. Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Mu'jam al-buldān*, mentions him twice.<sup>37</sup> In an article on Zābulistān (III: 125), he explains that the toponym derives from an eponymous Zābul (cf. Zāl), the grandfather of Rustam ibn Dastān. The second mention comes in an article on Sistan (III: 191) and, on the authority of Ibn al-Faqīh, defines it as the kingdom of Rustam the Mighty, who had been made king over it by Kay-Qāwūs.

Finally, we come to al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), one of our main sources on pre-Islamic Persia. In his *Tanbīh*, p. 94 (transl., p. 136), there is an extremely important passage on the wars between the Persians and the Turks:

*wa-qad dhakarnā fī ākhir al-juz' al-sābi' min Kitāb Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar li-ayyati 'illa kaththarat al-Furs sinī hā'ulā' l-mulūk wa-asrārahū fī dhālika wa-ḥurūbahū ma'a mulūk al-Turk – wa-tusammā tilka l-ḥurūb Baykāḥ, ma'nā dhālika al-jihād – wa-ghayrihim min al-umam wa-ḥurūb Rustam ibn Dastān wa-Isbandiyādh bi-bilād Khurāsān wa-Sijistān wa-Zābulistān*

"At the end of the seventh part of *Kitāb Murūj al-dhahab* we have mentioned the reason why Persians exaggerate the [regnal] years of these kings, their secrets concerning this, and their wars against the kings of the Turks – these wars are called *Baykāḥ*, which means "battle" – and other nations, as well as the battles between Rustam ibn Dastān and Isfandiyār in Khurasan, Sistan, and Zābulistān."

The term *baykāḥ* would seem primarily to refer to the battles between the Persians and the Turks, where Rustam plays a major role.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 589/1193), *Tabṣira*, p. 79, according to whom Rustam was among the very first to use a bow. The first was Adam, who had been taught by Gabriel.

<sup>37</sup> In addition, there are three possibly related place names, Rustamābādh, Rustamkūya, and al-Rustamiyya (III: 43), but without explicit reference to Rustam ibn Dastān.



Al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab*, §§541 and 543 (on Farāsiyāb), gives the key to our understanding of the place of Rustam in pre-Islamic and early Islamic sources.<sup>38</sup> The passages read:

*wa-li'l-Furs [khaṭb ṭawīl] fī kayfiyyat qatlihi (i.e., Afrāsiyāb) wa-ḥurūbihi wa-mā kāna bayna l-Furs wa-l-Turk min al-ḥurūb wa'l-ghārāt wa-mā kāna min qatl Siyāwukhsh wa-khabar Rustam ibn Dastān fa-hādhā kulluhu mawjūd mashrūḥ fī l-kitāb al-mutarjam bi-Kitāb al-Sakīsārān tarjamahu Ibn al-Muqaffa' min al-fārsiyya al-ūlā ilā l-'arabiyya wa-fīhi khabar Isfandiyār ... wa-qatl Rustam ibn Dastān lahu wa-mā kāna min qatl Bahman ibn Isfandiyār li-Rustam wa-ghayr dhālika min 'ajā'ib al-Furs al-ūlā wa-akhbārihā. wa-hādhā kitāb tu'aẓẓimuhu l-Furs li-mā qad taḍammāna min khabar aslāfihim wa-siyar mulūkihim wa-qad ataynā bi-ḥamd Allāh 'alā kathīr min akhbārihim fīmā salāfa min kutubinā. (Murūj §541)*

“Persians tell a lot about Afrāsiyāb's death and his battles, the battles and raids between Persians and Turks, the death of Siyāwush, and the story of Rustam ibn Dastān. All this is found explained in the book titled *Kitāb al-Sakīsārān*,<sup>39</sup> which was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa' from Ancient Persian into Arabic. The story of Isfandiyār (...) and how Rustam ibn Dastān killed him is narrated there, as well as how Bahman ibn Isfandiyār killed Rustam and other wonders and tales of the Ancient Persians. Persians make much of this book because it contains stories about their ancestors and their kings' histories. Thank God, we have been able to narrate many of their histories in our earlier books.”

*wa-'inda l-Furs 'alā mā dhukira fī Kitāb al-Sakīsārān anna Kay-Khusraw kāna qablahu 'alā l-mulki jadduhu li-abīhi wa-huwa Kay-Qāwūs wa-lam yakun li-Kay-Khusraw 'aqib fa-ja'ala l-mulk fī Luhrāsb. (Murūj §543)*

“According to what is told in the *Book of al-Sakīsārān* the Persians say that his paternal grandfather Kay-Qāwūs was the king before Kay-Khusraw and that Kay-Khusraw had no offspring, so he gave the kingship to Luhrāsb.”

<sup>38</sup> Discussed in Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

<sup>39</sup> The name has usually been interpreted as “the Saka Princes”, but one should also consider the toponym Saksārān, mentioned, e.g., in *Mujmal*, p. 43.

Thus, this *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* seems to have concentrated on the Turkish wars, Siyāwush, Isfandiyār, and Rustam. It also shows that the story of Rustam was already integrated with royal matter in the *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*.

In another passage, al-Masʿūdī seems to derive partly the same information from *Kitāb al-Baykār*, also translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ:

*banā hādhihi l-qalʿa* (i.e., *Bāb al-Lān*) *malik fī qadīm al-zamān min al-Furs al-awāʾil yuqālu lahu Isbandiyār*<sup>40</sup> *ibn Bistāsf* (variants) (...) *wa-hādhihi l-qalʿa iḥdā qilāʿ al-ʿālam al-mawṣūfa bi-l-manʿa wa-qad dhakarat ʿhā l-Furs fī ashʿārihā wa-mā kāna min Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf fī bināʾihā. wa-li-Isbandiyār*<sup>41</sup> *fī l-sharq ḥurūb kathīra maʿa aṣṇāf min al-umam wa-huwa l-sāʾir ilā aqāṣi bilād al-Turk fa-khar-raba Madīnat al-Ṣufr* (...) *wa-mā kāna min afʿāl Isbandiyār wa-mā waṣafnāhu fa-madhkur fī l-kitāb al-maʾrūf bi-Kitāb al-Baykār*<sup>42</sup> *naqalahu Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ ilā l-lisān al-ʿarabī. (Murūj §§479-480)*

“This fortress was built by an Ancient Persian king of old times, called Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf (...). This is one of the fortresses in the world that are described as impenetrable. The Persians mention it in their songs (*ashʿārihā*) and tell how Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf built it. Isbandiyār waged many wars in the East against various peoples. He was the one who travelled to the furthest parts of the Turkish lands and destroyed the City of Brass. The deeds of Isbandiyār and all the things we have told are mentioned in the book known as *Kitāb al-Baykār*, which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated into Arabic.”

What the passages clearly tell is that there was a vivid tradition of historical books, other than the *Khwadāynāmag*, and at least some of these came to be translated into Arabic, whether by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or others. At least two such books, *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* and *Kitāb al-Baykār*, contained Rustam material, and it is specifically this material that we find quoted, or referred to, in early Arabic works. The *Khwadāynāmag*, or its Arabic translation, the *Siyar al-mulūk*, on the contrary, is not mentioned by al-Masʿūdī, and may have contained next to no mentions of Rustam, which would not be surprising, as the refractory vassal would not have fitted in easily into an official royal chronicle. The two books, as described by al-Masʿūdī, cover virtually all the material that may be found in early Arabic sources,

<sup>40</sup> Note the different representation of the Persian P here, which could be taken as indicative of a different source. This makes it difficult to speculate on the possibility that al-BYKʿR (and variants) could be a corruption of al-SKYSRʿN.

<sup>41</sup> Erroneously written *Isbandiyārd*.

<sup>42</sup> Variants include *al-BNKSh* and *al-SKS*. It would need some emendations to read this as *al-Sakīsarān*.



and it is probable that they were the sources the other authors tapped, too, for this material, not the *Khwadāynāmag*. It should be emphasized that no source of ours, excepting the problematic *Nihāya*, claims to derive Rustam material from the *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translations. To speculate about this without tangible evidence is rather futile.

In *Murūj* §542, the unlucky Yemenite excursion of Kay-Qāwūs is referred to, and the Yemenite king is identified as Shammār-Yar‘ash, and his daughter is Su‘dā, the Sūdābe (Sūdāwe) of the Iranian tradition. Al-Mas‘ūdī briefly tells how Rustam ibn Dastān marched to Yemen with 4,000 men, killed Shammār-Yar‘ash, and saved Kay-Qāwūs, together with Su‘dā, which led to the scene of Su‘dā and Siyāwukhsh “until what famously happened to him with Afrāsiyāb the Turk, how he sought asylum with him, and married his daughter” (*hattā kāna min amrihi ma‘a Farāsiyāb al-Turkī mā qad shahara min isti‘mānihi ilayhi wa-tazawwujihī bi-bnatihī*), how Kay-Khusraw was born, how Siyāwukhsh was killed by Afrāsiyāb, and how Rustam killed Su‘dā and took revenge for Siyāwukhsh’s death by killing noble Turks.

According to *Murūj* §550, it was Bahman who, after several battles, killed Rustam.<sup>43</sup> The conversion of Bishtāsb to Zoroastrianism is mentioned in the same paragraph, but the two incidents are not explicitly connected.

Al-Mas‘ūdī is not alone in giving us information about separate translations of Rustam stories into Arabic. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. in 380s/990s), *Fihrist*, p. 364 (Dodge 1970: 716), mentions a *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim (late 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>44</sup> Whether this indeed was a translation from Middle Persian is far from clear, as in many cases, e.g., that of the *Khwadāynāmag*, it is quite clear that such “translations” should be seen as new versions based on existing Arabic translations.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868-869), *Rasā’il* II: 408 (*R. al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*) may refer to this book’s Middle Persian original: “the Mōbadh has told that he has read in the *Life of Isfandiyār* (...), written in Persian, that when Isfandiyār raided the land of the Khazars in order to save his sister from captivity (...)” (*wa-ḥakā l-mūbadh annahu qara’a fī Sīrat Isfandiyār (...) bi-l-Fārsiyya*<sup>46</sup> *annahu lammā ghazā bilād*

<sup>43</sup> For a theory about the meaning of Rustam’s killer, see O.M. Davidson (2006): 90-91 (= first edition, 1985, pp. 72-73). See also Yamamoto (2003): 75, n. 64.

<sup>44</sup> Listed sub *Asmā’ al-kutub allatī allafahā l-Furs fī l-siyar wa-l-asmār al-ṣaḥīḥa allatī li-mulūkihim*. For another of Jabala’s translations, that of the Bahrām Chūbīn novel, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364 (Bahrām Shūs, i.e., Chūbīn. Cf. also al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §644, Christensen 1936: 59, and Hämeen-Anttila 2017). For Jabala, see Shahīd (1984): 408-410.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hämeen-Anttila (2013). Similarly, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* was sometimes reworked on the basis of Ibn al-Muqaffa’s translation.

<sup>46</sup> For the language terminology at al-Jāhīz’s time, see, most recently, based on Lazard’s studies, Perry (2009).

*al-Khazar li-yastanqidha ukhtahu*<sup>47</sup> *min al-asr ...*). This quotation explicitly comes from a written Persian, most probably Middle Persian, source, not its Arabic translation. If it refers to the original text of the *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, then the focus of this book may have been on Isfandiyār rather than Rustam.

The only case where the *Khwadāynāmag*, in its Arabic translation, would seemingly be the source for an episode related to Rustam and his family is *Nihāya*, p. 82, quoted above. In addition, on p. 85, it is told, again on the authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, that Bahman married the great-granddaughter of Solomon, Ūmīdh-dukht: “I have found in *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam* in the story of Bahman ibn Isfandiyār (...)” (*wa-aṣabtu fī Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam fī qiṣṣat Bahman ibn Isfandiyār ...*). At first sight, this would seem to locate at least these episodes in an Arabic Book of Kings. The *Nihāya*, however, is a highly problematic source, which attributes materials in a blatantly anachronistic way to eminent authorities to gain prestige for its tales.<sup>48</sup> The latter passage is also problematic because it makes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ refer to his own translation as his source.

Thus, reading extant early Arabic sources only, one receives the impression that, with the exception of the story of Isfandiyār, Rustam is a minor hero, on a par with other Persian generals. It is significant that none of the stories about him are attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ’ s translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* (except for the dubious case of the *Nihāya*), and the information is probably derived from other, independent works, either translated from Middle Persian or written in Arabic on the basis of (Middle) Persian sources, either written or oral.

*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, and *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* (perhaps translated from the Persian *Sīrat Isfandiyār*), as far as we can deduce their contents, actually cover all the material that was transmitted in other Arabic sources, which means that there is no reason to attribute any of it to the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* where, moreover, Rustam would have been out of character if we assume, as is usually, and with good reason, done that the *Khwadāynāmag* was an official royal chronicle. A subaltern prince would not too easily have been shown superior to the kings in such a source, so one would expect this to be the situation: the Rustam stories’ mise-en-scène could more easily be expected to be separate narratives of perhaps more popular origin than an official royal chronicle.

On the other hand, there is reason to assume that many such stories were not translated from Middle Persian but were first composed in Arabic, although based on Persian lore. In some cases, such as that of Bahrām Gūr, it would be difficult to explain how the Arabs could have played such a major role in a book authored by Persians in Sasanian times or even soon after. If, on the other hand, the Arabs

<sup>47</sup> Note the singular. In the Firdawsian version, there are several sisters.

<sup>48</sup> The *Nihāya* and its use of sources is discussed in Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

are removed from this story, very little remains, which makes it rather obvious that the story was first composed in an Arab context and probably in Arabic.<sup>49</sup>

Once we turn to early Classical Persian sources of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter, the picture dramatically changes. The anonymous *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* (written 520/1126) shows both the influence of Firdawsī (explicitly mentioned), of other tenth-century versions of the Classical Persian Book of Kings, and of later epics, not in the form they have been preserved to us, but as earlier versions. The author also used the historical works of Ḥamza and al-Ṭabarī, thus combining various lines of traditions. The “official” Islamic version of history, as presented by al-Ṭabarī, does not, however, push the Persian tradition aside. On the contrary, on, e.g., p. 89, the author explicitly prefers these ancient sources to al-Ṭabarī.

The difference to Arabic sources is huge. The anonymous author resumes virtually everything Firdawsī narrates about Rustam, but it must be kept in mind that the author is also using the same sources as Firdawsī, so we cannot be sure whether in a particular case he is summarizing Firdawsī or his sources. The *Mujmal* lists the family members of Rustam, both ancestors and descendants, with genealogical details (pp. 25-26) and synchronizes or equates them with Biblical figures: Narīmān is identified with Noah and Rustam is given an alternative Arab genealogy (*Rustam-rā nisbat be-‘Arab kunand*) (p. 38). On the same page, there is also an interesting story about Isfandiyār’s invulnerability, which ties his story up with Biblical characters: God created for Solomon a spring of molten copper, of which statues were made. Solomon prayed to God to give these statues souls, and as he had no son, Gustāsf adopted Isfandiyār, who was one of the animated statues, which explains his unwoundable body. This is also why he was called *rūyīn-tan*, Copperbody.<sup>50</sup> He fled from Rustam to Turkistān, but Rustam followed him there to kill him. “This is utter nonsense,” concludes the author, “but we mention it because it is found in (the Persians’) tall tales (*khurāfāt*) and decrepit (*dāris*) books, which we have seen.”

The marriage of Zāl to Mihrāb, Rustam’s mother, is mentioned on pp. 42-43, and the following pages (pp. 43-44) summarize the deeds of Sām. On p. 45, we come to Rustam’s story: Zāl sends him to bring Kay-Qubād to be crowned. Rustam’s first battle (*Mujmal*, p. 38) is told in the same way as in Firdawsī: Rustam almost captures Afrāsiyāb, but Afrāsiyāb’s belt breaks and he gets away.

*Mujmal*, pp. 45-46, narrates how Rustam saved Kay-Kāwūs and killed the White Demon and the King of Māzandarān. Rustam and Afrāsiyāb fought in the Sawād of Baghdad or, according to another version, Rustam followed the Turkish King into Turkistān and fought him there. On p. 46, it is told how Rustam freed Kay-Kāwūs from Hāmāwarān. Brief mentions of Rustam’s new battles against

<sup>49</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (2017).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Nihāya*, p. 83, which says that “according to the Arabs, his (Isfandiyār’s) skin was of copper”.

Afrāsiyāb follow and then we are told the story of Suhrāb with all the details familiar from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, starting with Rakhsh having gone missing and ending with Rustam tragically killing his own son.

After this, the *Mujmal* moves on to narrate the story of Siyāwush. Rustam rears Siyāwush, whom Sūdāwe later attempts to seduce, although to no avail. Finally, Rustam slays the scheming stepmother and brings Kay-Khusraw to Iran. Rustam fights in Turkistān for seven years (p. 46).

In Kay-Khusraw's time Rustam intercedes for Tūs, kills Fūlādward, and fights against Afrāsiyāb. This is followed by "the story of Akwān Dēw" (*qiṣṣa-ye Akwān Dēw*). Then Rustam frees Bīzhan by disguising himself and his men as merchants and attacking Afrāsiyāb by night. All this is told on p. 48. Farāmarz is sent to India, and Rustam takes part in renewed battles against Afrāsiyāb (p. 49). Later, p. 52, it is told how Gustāsf sent Isfandiyār to fight Rustam and bring him to Iran in chains. Isfandiyār was mortally wounded (no mention of Sīmurg is made) and left Bahman to be reared by Rustam. Later Gustāsf demanded Bahman back. Shaghād managed to kill Rustam and Zawāre (p. 53), and later Bahman marched to Sistān to take revenge on the remaining family members (pp. 53-54).

There are also a few scattered mentions of Rustam elsewhere in the book, which further testify to Rustam's fame at the time (cf. Index of the *Mujmal*). Zoroaster's legerdemain in Balkh is mentioned on p. 92, but Rustam plays no role in this context.

Keeping in mind that the author wished to present a concise historical work and hence condensed his material, it can be said that the whole Rustam material found in Firdawsī's epic, and some more, is contained in this work.

Although the *Mujmal* is the clearest example of Rustam's importance in early Persian sources (excluding Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*), many other works give a similar impression of his fame. Ibn al-Balkhī's *Fārsnāme* (written before 510/1116) is largely dependent on Arabic sources, but the author has augmented these with Persian ones. In this book, the main passage on Rustam comes in the chapter on Kay-Kāwūs, pp. 40-43.<sup>51</sup> The passage relates how Rustam educated Siyāwūsh (sic, elsewhere in the *Fārsnāme* Siyāwush) in Zāwulistān; how with his troops he brought Kay-Khusraw to Iran and slew the army of the pursuers (no other generals are mentioned: Rustam is the sole hero); and how he freed Kay-Kāwūs from Yemen. Two versions of this are given, one according to Persian and the other according to (South) Arab historians, but both come from Arabic sources. The passage ends with Kay-Kāwūs' manumission of Rustam, and the manumission letter (*āzādānāme*) given in full (cf. above).

In addition, there is on p. 53, a short mention of how Wishtāsf sent Isfandiyār to fight (*paykār*) Rustam-e Dastān "as is well known" (*chunānke ma'lūm-ast*) and

<sup>51</sup> Incidentally, the chapter is very close to the Arabic tradition, as exemplified by al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §§112-122, which shows that at least here Ibn al-Balkhī closely follows Arabic sources.

Isfandiyār was killed. Although this is only a brief mention, it shows how this particular episode was considered to be generally known. The use of the word *paykār* is again worthy of attention.

In Gardīzī's *Zayn* (written in the early 440s/1050s), the influence of Firdawsī, or his source, explains Rustam's strong presence.<sup>52</sup> Rustam frees Kay-Kāwūs from "Māzandarān, which is called Yemen". Kay-Kāwūs rewards him by giving him Sistan and other fiefs (p. 74, no manumission letter is mentioned). In the Siyāwush episode, Rustam marches to Turkistān to take revenge on Afrāsiyāb for Siyāwush's father and fights many battles there, finally killing Afrāsiyāb (p. 76). When he grew tired of worldly life, Kay-Khusraw gave presents and fiefs, giving Rustam Sistan (again) and other provinces, as well as his personal clothes and gardens. Rustam and the other nobles followed him on his last mysterious trip (pp. 76-77). On pp. 77-78, Gardīzī tells how at the time of Kay-Gushtāsp, Zoroaster introduced a new religion. No mention of Rustam's reaction is given. On pp. 78-79, it is told how Gushtāsp sent Isfandiyār against Rustam, and Isfandiyār gave him the choice either to convert, to fight, or to be bound in chains and brought to the court of the king (the demand of conversion was not mentioned on p. 78, as if two versions of the story contaminated each other here). Rustam chose to fight. Sīmurgh is not mentioned, otherwise the fight follows (in an abbreviated form) the version of Firdawsī (or his source). The dying Isfandiyār left Bahman for Rustam to rear. Finally, on p. 80, it is told that when Bahman took his revenge, Rustam was already dead.

Hamd Allāh Mustawfī (d. 750/1349-1350), *Tārīkh-e guzīde*, follows the model of Firdawsī. Kay-Qubād freed Iran from the hands of Afrāsiyāb by the aid of *Zāl-e zar* and his son Rustam and made Rustam the champion (*jahān-pahlawān*, p. 86). In the chapter on Kay-Kāwūs' reign Rustam's heroic deeds, the *haft-khān*, are referred to but not related, and later he frees the King in Hāmāwarān, and Kāwūs gives him his sister Mīhrnāz as his wife (p. 87). This is followed by Rustam's hunt in Samangān and the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb, told in five lines, under the indubitable influence of Firdawsī (p. 88). Next, Rustam, the *atābak* of the king, kills Sūdāwe, and later destroys Turkistān, taking part in the war against the Turks, to revenge Siyāwush's death (pp. 88-89). The story of Bīzhan and Manīzhe is briefly told in Firdawsī's version (pp. 89-90). Then Gush-tāsf marches against Arjāsf, but Rustam remains behind. Later, Isfandiyār is sent against Rustam and is killed. Finally, Bahman kills Farāmarz in his war against Rustam's family (one manuscript mentions that Rustam had already been killed by a brother of his) (pp. 93-94).

In the anonymous *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* (main part written soon after 448/1062?) the whole Sistānian family is prominent.<sup>53</sup> In this book, Rustam's story starts during

<sup>52</sup> On the relations between the two, see Hämeen-Anttila (2014): 96-99.

<sup>53</sup> Malik-shāh Sīstānī's (d. after 1028/1620) *Iḥyā' al-mulūk* follows *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* rather closely while elaborating some parts.

Kay-Qubād's rule when the hero is fourteen and fights in Turkistān, taking revenge for Siyāwukhsh (p. 53, transl. p. 5). The anonymous author refers to Farāmarz's deeds, which he knows in an edition of twelve volumes.<sup>54</sup> As the deeds of Narīmān, Sām, and Dastān are told in the *Shāhnāme* (but it remains open to whose *Shāhnāme* the author is referring to) they need not be repeated here, the author says. He also knows that the *ḥadīth-e Rustam* has been versified by Bū l-Qāsim Firdawsī and repeats the legend that Maḥmūd of Ghazna said that the *Shāhnāme* was nothing, except for the story of Rustam, and that he had in his army a thousand Rustams. All the heroes of the Sistanian family are well known, the author adds, and it is not possible to repeat all their deeds. He even mentions the *Bakhtiyār-nāme*, thus bringing the story of Rustam's family up to the fifth generation, counting from Rustam's grandfather, Sām.<sup>55</sup> All this is told within the limits of one page, p. 53 (transl. p. 5). On the next page, p. 54 (transl. p. 6), the genealogy of the author's patron is taken up to Rustam and the Sistanian heroes.

The author also knows Bū l-Mu'ayyad's *Kitāb-e Garshāsb* (p. 75, transl. p. 24).<sup>56</sup> He emphasizes that the Sistanian family, up to Farāmarz, kept their aboriginal religion, which they derived from Adam (p. 73, transl. p. 23). The battle, *paykār* (note again the word), between Isfandiyār and Rustam was caused by the new religion of Zartusht (pp. 73-74, transl. p. 23).

To end the section of Persian authors, Ṭūsī's *'Ajā'ib* is a valuable, but all too little studied book. It takes us to a different tradition, which is sparsely documented. Ṭūsī's *'Ajā'ib* taps sources, oral or written, which are more popular than those used by historians of the time and gives us a glimpse of what went on outside learned circles. It is not surprising that Ṭūsī includes references to stories which later surface in popular epics.

Ṭūsī's *'Ajā'ib* was written soon after the last date mentioned in the text, 562/1166 (p. 300, cf. Preface, p. xvi)<sup>57</sup> and it uses a lot of material familiar from later epics, but little from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. However, the author highly respects Ḥasan-e (!) Firdawsī of Tūs (p. 246).<sup>58</sup> On p. 473, there is the earliest attestation of a story that is found in, e.g., Baysunghurī's *Shāhnāme*<sup>59</sup> about Ḥasan-e Firdawsī and Maḥmūd-e Ghaznī. According to it, Firdawsī became rich after having seen Rustam-e Zāl in a dream and been told about a treasure in Tūs. The

<sup>54</sup> Cf. van Zutphen (2014): 416.

<sup>55</sup> For the *Bakhtiyār-nāme*, see van Zutphen (2014): 261, 270.

<sup>56</sup> For Abū l-Mu'ayyad al-Balkhī, see de Blois (1992-1997): 67-68, and van Zutphen (2014): 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> Other early dates: 555 (p. 276); 561 ("in our times", p. 299).

<sup>58</sup> This shows how misguided we are if we automatically expect Firdawsī to dominate the 12<sup>th</sup>-century sources: Ṭūsī knew Firdawsī, but either did not feel inclined to use his epic or did not have it at hand. For the name of Firdawsī, cf. Shahbazi (1991): 20 and note 3.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Shahbazi (1991): 7.



book also contains dozens (if not hundreds) of references to Alexander, largely familiar from the various versions of the *Alexander Romance*,<sup>60</sup> as also to Anūshirwān's miraculous deeds and journeys. Afīdūn, Ḍahḥāk, and Bahrām Chūbīn also appear often.

Ṭūsī mentions Narīmān's conquest of China (pp. 191, 419) and tells an interesting variant of the reason why Zāl was abandoned by Sām (p. 418): it was the blackness of Zāl's body, not the whiteness of his hair that was the cause of shame. Also otherwise the story differs from Firdawsī: the author knew Firdawsī and respected him, but he either did not know the contents of the *Shāhnāme* too well or did not care to offer the version told there, but preferred other narratives that are, as in this case, in dire contradiction to what Firdawsī wrote.

Ṭūsī uses Rustam's standard Arabic epithet *al-Shadīd*, the Mighty (pp. 263, 419),<sup>61</sup> which may indicate that at least sometimes he used, either directly or indirectly, Arabic sources for the Persian national history, whereas the material common to the later epics probably comes from Persian sources. The author tells that Rustam and Zāl's tombs are in Samanjūr and that Rustam's palace lies in ruins outside of Zāwulistān (p. 230). He also tells that the descendants of Rustam still rule BWLS, which lies on the coast of *daryā-ye Maghrib*, only six parasangs from al-Andalus (p. 190).

Like many other sources, Ṭūsī tells (p. 420) how Rustam liberated Kay-Kāwūs. The story of Rustam and Akwān Dēw is mainly told on the lines of Firdawsī, but with some significant differences (pp. 493-494). The source is given as "it is told in books" (*dar kutubhā āwurde-and*) and Firdawsī is not mentioned. On p. 510, Ṭūsī briefly relates the story of Rustam and the White Demon. The most interesting passage comes on p. 75, where it is told why Rustam did not believe in Zoroaster: in his early career Zoroaster had exercised legerdemain (*huqqa-bāzī*) in the court of Rustam, who had given him a small reward. When Zoroaster later claimed to be a prophet, Rustam did not believe in him.<sup>62</sup>

This selection of Persian sources shows that the image of Rustam was much more central in the Persian than in the Arabic tradition. Yet even though all early Persian historical sources, except Bal'amī, are later than Firdawsī they do not slavishly follow his version of Rustam's adventures. In some, the influence of Firdawsī is clear, and some even mention him as one of their sources, but even these add incidents not known from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. When narrating the same episodes, they may also have significant differences to Firdawsī, which implies that they also had other sources at hand and sometimes preferred these to Firdawsī.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., pp. 5-9. In general, see Doufikaar-Aerts (2010).

<sup>61</sup> Written al-Sadīd on p. 419.

<sup>62</sup> On pp. 442-443, the origin of Zoroastrianism is again told, but this time without mentioning Rustam.

It is clear that in early Islamic times in Iran a wide range of Rustam narratives were in circulation. Some may have been oral, but references to separate stories, where Rustam played a role (*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, *Sīrat Isfandiyār*) and which were not integrated into the *Khwadāynāmag*, or its Arabic translation(s), imply that written Middle Persian versions may also have been available. Some of these separate stories may first have been written down in Arabic, while others may have circulated in Middle Persian, and yet others may have been put down in early Classical Persian in the tenth century directly from oral tradition.

The history of Iran, written in Arabic by al-Tha‘ālibī, *Ghurār akhbār mulūk al-Furs wa-siyarīhim*,<sup>63</sup> stands out among early Arabic sources. The work was written before 412/1022 in the circles of Ghazna, and it is still an open question as to how extensively al-Tha‘ālibī may have known Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme*, but he was probably not translating Firdawsī, although he may have used his epic as a secondary source. Both works, instead, seem closely to follow the same model. There are two reasons why Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme* should not be seen as al-Tha‘ālibī’s immediate model and main source.<sup>64</sup>

The first is a speculative one. Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme* does not dominate the scene in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century and there is no reason to suppose it should have done so. The later fame of Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme* should not lead us to suppose that it must have been an instant success. The voluminous, and hence expensive and hard-to-get work left little mark in the literature of the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, so al-Tha‘ālibī would be a unique example of a work strongly dependent on Firdawsī merely a few years after its completion.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, and more importantly, there are clear differences, not attributable to al-Ṭabarī or other known historians, between the two sources, as already noted by Zotenberg, the editor of the *Ghurār*.<sup>66</sup> The information in the *Ghurār*, which differs, or is missing, from Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme* is not whimsical, but tallies with other versions and has thus to derive from earlier sources, whether oral or written. A probable solution is that both authors were using the same source, either the *Prose Shāhnāme* or some of the other early versifications or prosaic versions of

<sup>63</sup> The work, in fact, is a general history of which only the part dealing with Persia has been edited.

<sup>64</sup> This does not mean that he could not have used Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāme* as a secondary source. See also Hämeen-Anttila (2014): 95-100.

<sup>65</sup> Shahbazi dates the first edition to 384/994 (pp. 71-75), the second to 395/1004 (p. 85), and the final edition in 400/1009-10 (p. 94). The earlier editions are hypothetical and would have contained only part of the material (and could, hence, not have given al-Tha‘ālibī all the material he has), so that al-Tha‘ālibī would have had to use the edition of 400 less than 12 years after its completion.

<sup>66</sup> See Zotenberg’s *Préface*, pp. xxv-xlii.



the Book of Kings. These date from the tenth century, and they show a proliferation of Rustam stories, as well as stories about the other Sistanian heroes.

Whether using Firdawsī or not, al-Thaʿālibī was familiar with both the Persian Book of Kings tradition and Arab historians. He mentions al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī's<sup>67</sup> *muzdawija* in Persian (p. 10), refers to a *Kitāb Shāhnāme* (pp. 263, 457, cf. p. xxiii), and quotes from al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Khurdādhbe,<sup>68</sup> Ḥamza al-Isfahānī (see p. xix), and al-Maqdisī (p. xxi).

The difference to earlier Arabic sources is considerable. For al-Thaʿālibī – and one should keep in mind that he may, or may not, be the same al-Thaʿālibī as the famous author of the *Thimār* and the *Iʿjāz* – Rustam is a figure of central importance and there are few stories of him in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* that are not paralleled in the *Ghurār*. Thus, one finds there the story of Rustam's birth and youth (pp. 104-106),<sup>69</sup> his finding a horse, Rakhsh (pp. 140-145), his first fight against Afrāsiyāb (pp. 145-147), his freeing Kay-Kāwūs from the King of Yemen, Dhū l-Adhʿār (pp. 161-163), a brief mention of Rustam being made the *iṣbahbadh* of Iran by Kay-Kāwūs, who also renews his vice-regency (*tawliya*) in Nīmrūz, Zābulistān, and India (p. 165), the story of Siyāwush, including Rustam rearing him (pp. 168-170), Siyāwush going to war against Afrāsiyāb with Rustam and their making peace with the Turkish King (pp. 187-198), the killing of Suʿdā alias Sūdhāne (sic)<sup>70</sup> by Rustam, and the revenge for Siyāwush (pp. 216-218), Rustam and others welcoming the returning Kay-Khusraw (p. 221), his receiving a legacy from Kay-Khusraw and the new King, Luhrāsf giving an audience to him (p. 238), and the *haft-khān* of Isfandiyādh, which ties up with the story of Rustam (pp. 301ff.).

The conflict between Isfandiyādh and Rustam is discussed in detail on pp. 341-375. The story is very similar to that given by Firdawsī (and, presumably, the source common to both), but it contains some interesting differences, the most remarkable of which is the mention of a raven that guided Bahman, the son of Isfandiyādh, to where Rustam was hunting. This detail is attributed to *khurāfāt al-Furs*, which, again, shows that al-Thaʿālibī is using other (oral or written) sources to complement his main source. Finally, on pp. 379-385, it is told how a

<sup>67</sup> For the author, see de Blois (1992-1997): 191-192.

<sup>68</sup> This may refer to Ibn Khurdādhbe's *K. Jamharat ansāb al-Furs wa'l-nawāqil* or to his *K. al-Taʿrīkh*, see van Zutphen (2014): 234-235, n. 33.

<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that Rustam's mother is called Rūdhāwadh, not Rūd(h)ābe. Although the difference is slight, it supports the idea that Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is not the source of the *Ghurār*.

<sup>70</sup> Whether this is a mere scribal error for Sūdhābe or a sign of a tradition different from that of Firdawsī is not clear. The Arabicized name Suʿdā shows the influence of Arabic historical works, but the author mainly uses the Iranian form Sūdhān/be.

brother of Rustam, Shaghāy,<sup>71</sup> killed him by a ruse, and how Bahman later took his revenge on the other members of Rustam's family (pp. 386-388). The same passage, p. 388, also mentions that according to al-Mas'ūdī al-Marwazī's Persian *muzdawija*, Bahman also killed Zāl during this expedition, a detail running contrary to the main story of al-Tha'ālibī (and Firdawsī). What it shows is that al-Mas'ūdī al-Marwazī had already interwoven the fates of the dynasty of the Sistanians with the national history, which, of course, we also know on the Arabic side from the other al-Mas'ūdī, the author of *Murūj* and *Tanbīh*, onwards.

On pp. 301-302, al-Tha'ālibī refers to Isfandiyādh's *haft-khān* as irrational and says that he repeats the story only because it is famous and kings and ordinary people like it and because it is found on *ṣuḥuf* (separate, short manuscripts?) as well as in pictorial representations.<sup>72</sup>

The version of al-Tha'ālibī gives Rustam the central place he also has in Firdawsī's epic. Episodes found in Firdawsī and lacking in al-Tha'ālibī are few, the most important being the story of Bīzhan and Manīzhe; Rustam's *haft-khān*; Akwān Dēw; and the tragic story of Rustam and Suhrāb.<sup>73</sup> It is hard to say whether these were lacking in the common source of al-Tha'ālibī and Firdawsī. Probably they were, as al-Tha'ālibī does not abbreviate his sources much in other cases, and only the dropping of Rustam's *haft-khān* and his encounter with Akwān Dēw could be explained by his negative attitude towards the *khurāfāt al-Furs*, although it is more probable that at least the *haft-khān* of Rustam was a late addition (by Firdawsī?) to the material based on Isfandiyār's similar deeds.<sup>74</sup> However, they cannot be used as binding evidence for Firdawsī having invented these episodes or having been the first to insert them into the national history. What does strike one, though, is that these particular episodes stand out as rather separate stories, not quite as clearly linked to the main story as most other episodes.<sup>75</sup>

The inspection of early Arabic and Classical Persian sources enables us to assess the position of Rustam before Firdawsī. Our sources on Rustam in pre-Islamic times are meagre, but there is no reason to doubt that he was a major character in the Eastern Iranian world, that stories about him were told or sung in some

<sup>71</sup> I.e., Shaghādh – the change is easily explainable either by a phonetic or orthographic change and cannot be taken as an indication that al-Tha'ālibī would here be using a different source.

<sup>72</sup> In addition, there are some passing mentions of Rustam.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. also van Zutphen (2014): 235.

<sup>74</sup> This was suggested early on by Nöldeke (1920): 47-48.

<sup>75</sup> Shahbazi (1991): 66, believes that the stories of Bīzhan and Manīzhe, Akwān Dēw, the White Demon, and Suhrāb belonged to the first edition of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Did Firdawsī start his career by complementing the received version of the Book of Kings by versifying episodes that were lacking from the main versions of the Book of Kings?

Iranian language(s), and that he was known at least by name also in the Western parts of Iran and in Armenia.

In the mid-eighth century some of these stories had reached the Arabic world through the translation by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ of *Kitāb al-Baykār* and *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, and soon after the material was expanded, or reworked, in Jabala's *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*. It is not clear whether it was Rustam or Isfandiyār who was the main focus in the last-mentioned book: the title *Sīrat Isfandiyār*, used by al-Jāhīz and possibly referring to the same work, would imply that it may well have been Isfandiyār, who, despite his final defeat at the hands of Rustam, was the work's main character.<sup>76</sup> In the first two books, Rustam was clearly present but again it remains uncertain whether or not he was their main character.

The Rustam episodes of these separate books influenced only a small part of Arabic historical literature. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ' s translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* was, on the other hand, extremely influential and all later Arabic historical works seem to tap it for materials. Thus, we have no dearth of material on mythological figures such as al-Ḍaḥḥāk<sup>77</sup> or Jamshīd and later kings in Arabic sources that discuss pre-Islamic Persia. Yet, Rustam is almost ignored in the Arabic tradition before al-Thaʿālibī, except for the matter covered by the separate translations by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Jabala and quoted only in a few books. Had Rustam been strongly present in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ' s translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, it would be difficult to explain why certain early sources, such as al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* and Ibn Qutayba's *Maʾārif*, have nothing on Rustam, though they have plenty of material on other figures of the Iranian national history.

This seems to leave but one explanation. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ' s widely-read translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* contained little material on Rustam. Further, although it is not impossible that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ would have left out such material on purpose, no obvious reason for this can be seen – in the case of al-Ṭabarī we could, of course, claim that as his focus was on the prophets and kings, Rustam had no place in his book, but even this is very speculative, as many of Rustam's adventures, as told in al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* or Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, tie up with the royal history. More probably, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ' s translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* had little to tell about Rustam because its Middle Persian original did not have much on Rustam either.

This actually is what we might expect. If the *Khwadāynāmag* was, as it seems to have been, a *royal* chronicle, the very counterweight to the kings had little room

<sup>76</sup> I find it improbable, but not impossible, that there could have been a version where it was Isfandiyār who slew Rustam, not the other way round: the sole piece of evidence for this comes from the late and somewhat insecure passage in al-Suhaylī's *Rawḍ*. Isfandiyār's *haft-khān* were probably older than Rustam's, and the latter may have been copied from the former at the time Rustam's role in the Book of Kings tradition was rapidly growing.

<sup>77</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (2014).

in it: the Sasanian kings were hardly enthusiastic about a hero who is often shown superior to his overlords in a moral sense. Hence, *a priori*, one expects Rustam not to have been given much place in such a work and Ibn al-Muqaffa's lack of Rustam stories corroborates this. The Arabic evidence makes it hard to claim Rustam had more than a marginal role to play in the *Khwadāynāmag*, if even that.

The Arabic translations of some separate episodes in the Iranian national history (*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, perhaps the same as *Sīrat Isfandiyār*), on the other hand, show that by the mid-eighth century Rustam had to some extent been integrated into the history of the kings, but this does not mean that he would have found a place in the *Khwadāynāmag* itself.

Tenth-century evidence shows that at that time Rustam was fully integrated into the storyline of the national history and had found a place in works that related the whole national history of Iran. This should not be taken to mean that the *Khwadāynāmag* would later have been revised in its Middle Persian form.<sup>78</sup> When tenth-century kings patronized the writing of Persian history, Middle Persian texts were not what they were after. They wanted to have texts in their own literary language, the emerging Classical Persian. The legend about the compilation of the *Prose Shāhnāme* does not indicate that the Zoroastrian scholars involved would have *written* their work in Middle Persian and it is not even clear to what extent they used Middle Persian works as their sources. They probably did use whatever Middle Persian material they had at hand, but they will also have used earlier texts written in Persian or Arabic, as well as oral information, whether epic songs or prose stories. Of these latter we know little, and it is not the purpose of the present paper to discuss them. To claim that these scholars, or anyone else, wrote new Middle Persian versions of the *Khwadāynāmag* – or any new Middle Persian works – is speculative and unwarranted. We have no evidence for this.

From the point of view of Firdawsī, it seems that he received most of the Rustam material already integrated into the national history by his predecessors writing in Arabic and, in the tenth century, in Classical Persian. In addition, he may well have found other separate Rustam stories, such as that of Bīzhan and Manīzhe or Rustam and Suhrāb, which first surface in his *Shāhnāme*. Whether they derived from Āzādsarw<sup>79</sup> we cannot know, but this is possible. It is also possible that this integration had partly taken place in the *Prose Shāhnāme* or the other *Shāhnāmes* of the tenth century, even though the evidence from al-Tha'ālibī's *Ghurār* would seem to speak against this.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Pourshariati (2008): 462, speaks of “editorial manipulations of the Ispahbudhān family” through which Rustam found a place in the Book of Kings tradition, but sees this as a redaction of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

<sup>79</sup> For Āzādsarw, see van Zutphen (2014): 29-31, 111, 113.

<sup>80</sup> Van Zutphen (2014): 28, 552, believes that the Sistanian heroes had been incorporated into the *Khwadāynāmag*, but sees this as a “collective title”.

A separate origin for at least some of Firdawsī's Rustam stories finds some evidence in his habit of referring to old *dihqāns* and other authorities when he comes to such passages. It seems that when versifying his main source (presumably the *Prose Shāhnāme*), Firdawsī does not bother to give proofs for the authority of his source – he was resuming well-known material and hence was not in need of further authorization. When adding separate incidents, on the contrary, he was stepping outside the limits of the authoritative history of Iran and had to defend his additions by referring to authorities. Only when innovative did he feel the need to refer to venerable sources. This is also seen in the fact that references to “ancient sources” start with the Rustam cycle, as if Firdawsī would have wanted to emphasize that these stories, too, were worthy of inclusion into the national history. Other orphan stories, which are marked by such references and thus probably originally come from outside the established tradition, seem mainly to include stories inappropriate for a Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* (e.g., especially, Dārāb's fight against the Arab army led by Shu'ayb, perhaps modelled after stories about Abū Muslim, d. 137/755).<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusion

We have next to no indication that Rustam would have been known to the Arabs before Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century. Sources until the mid-tenth century seem to concentrate on a limited number of scenes in Rustam's life and these particular scenes were the subject of separate texts on Rustam, known to have existed in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century and nowhere claimed to have constituted part of the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* or any of its translations into Arabic. They were only integrated in the tenth century into the *Shāhnāmes* written in early Classical Persian. The Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*, as we can see from the Arabic books that used it, may not perhaps even have mentioned Rustam and if it did, it was probably on a par with other heroes, not as the central character of the narrative. The separate Arabic texts, on the other hand, show that the stories of Rustam were interwoven into the lives of some Persian kings (especially Kay-Qubādh, Kay-Kāwūs, and Kay-Khusraw), which proves that the process of intermingling the two traditions had begun by the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as shown by Firdawsī's epic, other *Shāhnāmes*, and al-Tha'ālibī's *Ghurār*, the process had been finalized and Rustam had become the greatest hero of Persian national history but there is no tangible evidence that this would have found form in any rewritten version that would have been titled *Khwadāynāmag* or would have been written in Middle Persian. What is clear, though, is that the various *Shāhnāmes* of the 10<sup>th</sup> century had produced a storyline

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Yamamoto (2003): 74–76, which also includes a list of such orphan stories. Yamamoto does not quite seem to realize the implications of her own argumentation as to Firdawsī's use of sources. For the “opening lines”, mechanically used in the tales of the Sasanian period, see Yamamoto (2003): 76.

mainly in harmony with the later work of Firdawsī or, in other words, Firdawsī received the bulk of his material, probably in Classical Persian, in the form that he was to eternalize in his epic. At the same time, he probably added to this storyline some new episodes, which we cannot locate in any earlier version of the national history and which may thus have been added by Firdawsī. These episodes were not invented by Firdawsī but only integrated by him into an existing storyline. The later epics, such as the *Garshāspnāme* and the *Farāmarznāmes*, continued the process of incorporating more material into the complete story of the national history.

The existence of a voluminous repertoire of stories about the Sistanian heroes is proven by the later epics which contain individual details that can be corroborated by sources earlier than Firdawsī and have, hence, to tap sources (oral or otherwise) that existed before him. This also makes it probable that instead of inventing new episodes, Firdawsī, as most contemporary authors were wont to, received the stories from older tradition and merely versified them. Later, he inserted them into his magisterial epic. It is possible that he himself conceived the concept of a unified narrative only later, after he had begun his career by composing separate stories.

What, then, was the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* like? In addition to ignoring Rustam, it also seems to have contained remarkably few stories and been mainly a dry chronological work, as I have elsewhere argued.<sup>82</sup> When translated into Arabic, narrative elements may have been added to it, but it is only in the tenth-century Classical Persian texts that we first encounter a fully-developed narrative history of Iran, in which the episodes, hitherto transmitted as separate texts, had been integrated into the chronological framework of the *Khwadāynāmag*, creating a powerful epic narrative of great literary merit, which culminated in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*.

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<sup>82</sup> Hämeen-Anttila (2013).



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